

Traveller appeals legal aid refusal

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A WOMAN who lost legal aid funding following an Echo expose is appealing against the decision.

Cathrine McCann, of Hovefields Drive, Wickford, was getting public funds for a legal battle to stay living on her unauthorised caravan pitch.

It was revoked after an Echo investigation revealed she claimed legal aid, despite having cash to pay outright for a £230,000 house a few hundred metres away.

Funding was revoked by the Legal Service Commission which launched a review following the article.

However, Mrs McCann has appealed to the commission to get it back, despite earlier admitting owning the five-bedroom house, Southview.

Settled residents at Hovefields are flabbergasted.

One man, who refused to be named for fear of reprisals, said: "This is a joke, considering they now own a house."

"There were three deliveries from B&Q to Southview last week. It looked like a nice new

- ❑ Funds cut after **Echo** found woman bought own house
- ❑ She is battling eviction notice

kitchen and bathroom were going in."

The Echo's research discovered Mrs McCann claimed to have spent her life in a caravan on the roadside, when she had actually lived in traditional housing for 22 years.

To qualify for legal aid, a claimant cannot have more than £8,000 assets, over and above the first £100,000 of equity in their main home.

The revocation meant she was dropped from the appeal to the House of Lords against eviction, which was made by several travellers at Dale Farm, Crays Hill, and Hovefields.

She has now lodged an appeal against the revocation, hoping to get back public funding to rejoin the case.

A Basildon Council source said: "If the appeal is successful she could be merged back with the case, even though she has a house."

"It seems ludicrous. Her other option is to pay for the legal action herself to rejoin the case."

Andrew Montgomery, Legal Service Commission spokesman, would neither confirm nor deny the appeal had been lodged.

Donald Kenrick, Mrs McCann's planning agent, said he doubted the appeal would be successful in light of her owning the house.

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■ Cathrine McCann – appealing the withdrawal of legal aid to help her fight an eviction challenge

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